

To whoever may read these letters let me say that they were written from day to day as the trip progressed, in long hand.

As I am not an expert typist numerous errors will be found in the transcription,

I trust that the reader will be charitable and generous in overlooking those errors, and seek beyond them for the mental stimulation which such a journey affords.

*Watson B. Porter.*

New York City,  
Feb. 21 1933.

My dear Claude,

Once more we start on one of our jaunts. We left Newton in a Packard car with Don Fletcher driving. Along Charlesbank Road the car got out of control and dove into a snow bank. We had to shovel out, and when we got going again dove into a snow bank on the other side of the road. Shovel out again, we shoveled out again, and then went on to Boston, bumpity-bang-bump, but going never the less, and arrived at the South Station after several incidents but no accidents. Well, we had made a start, but what a start. At 14:30 we were told that all train service to New York was discontinued until further notice due to the storm.

After some inquiries we learned that service between Albany and New York was being maintained, so we secured seats on the Wolverine as far as Albany, and took a chance on getting from Albany to New York City in time for sailing. We arrived in Albany forty minutes late, and took a section on the train leaving Albany at 01:05, expecting to enter the car at 21:30 and get a good night's sleep. Well, our car was not "placed" until 23:40 so we missed out on that; but we finally got on board and went to bed. After being bumped around the Albany yards for an hour or more, things quieted down and we went to sleep. We left Albany two hours late and arrived in New York in the same relation to schedule or 06:45. Left the car at 07:20 and had some breakfast. Then I got shaved and did a few little errands. We took a cab from the Grand Central and arrived at the Ward line dock at the foot of Wall street at 09:45 only to find that sailing time was put ahead from 11:00 to 14:00. Any how we went aboard and had plenty of time to look around and get our bearings. The ship is somewhat old, but we have a big outside room, and things look as if every thing was bound to be fine.

On board S.S.Orizaba at sea.  
Feb.23,1934.

Dear Claude:-

Nothing out of the ordinary happened during the first twenty-four hours; but just off Hatteras we ran into a south-west storm and this old hooker went onto action and by that I don't mean knee-action either. We went to bed early the first night out and slept almost continuously for eighteen hours. I am writing this the second night at sea, after dinner. The sea has calmed down somewhat, and there was a marvelously beautiful sunset which I watched alone from a vantage point on the starboard side of the lower deck. I thought of the lines which you and I have discussed together; how is it that they start? "Era gia l'ora che volge il disio ai naviganti!"

On board S.S.Orizaba at sea.  
Feb 24,1934.

Dear Friend Claude:-

This has been a day of days, warm and balmy; at 10:00 we steamed around ancient Morro Castle and up the very narrow channel into Havana harbor, and let me assure you it was a glorious sight. For about one and one-half <sup>hours</sup> before reaching "el Morro" the ship skirts the Cuban Coast, and I was surprised to see with the aid of the binoculars the hills of the island rising away from the coast. For some time we could see the domes and spires of the city rising in the distance. But what emotions arise in one as the ship rounds the old Morro fortress and heads up the channel. On the right one sees parks and boulevards with buildings of distinctive architecture; on the left, grim old fortifications handed down from Spanish colonial times. Our ship made only a very short stay, discharging mail and passengers. When we left it was already dark, and as we swung out of the harbor, the city and shore lights were a sight to behold. The dock where we tied up is a very short distance from where the U.S.S. Maine lay on fatal february night of 1898. And how that takes one's mind to that beautiful spot in Arlington with the fore-top of the old ship and the scores of tiny head-stones marked "unknown! A lump in one's throat? yes, and why not?



The U.S.S. Richmond lay at anchor near by and the Destroyer MacFarlane. Really Uncle Sam's ships look good in a foreign port. As we passed up the channel the Cuban flag was very much in evidence and to me it is one of the prettiest of flags, I think next to our own the very prettiest. How well I remember back in '98 when it was adopted as the national emblem and nearly every one wore a small one in his coat lapel. Really I am glad to have had this glimpse of Havana before going ashore; it prepares one in a way for the visit yet to come, instead of giving one the whole city, so to speak on the very first visit. We are now en route to Progreso, and are due to arrive there at 18:00 to-morrow night, February 25.

February 25, 1934

Arrived off Progreso at 19:30 and find that we must anchor here all night as the customs and immigration authorities will not come out after 18:00, so here we are and here we stay. Of course the delay disrupts our schedule, and we are forced to lose one day in Mexico City. At the very best we can not reach Vera Cruz before Tuesday morning and no one knows at what time. Because the train ride from Vera Cruz to Mexico City is one of the principal attractions of the trip, it will be necessary to wait over twenty four hours in order to take the day train. It is barely possible that we may have a special train but no one knows about that at the present time. One might take the noon train as far as Orizaba and spend the night there, picking up the day train the next day about noon; but just now it is all a matter of waiting to see what time we get to Vera Cruz and what arrangements can be made. It is a marvelous balmy night, warm and restful; one of the soft tropical nights one reads about so often.

February 26, Monday.

Just after lunch and we are "under way" for Vera Cruz and the end of the voyage. Last night was very comfortable, we did not need the fan in our room. I woke up about 03:15 and looked out of the port-hole and delight of delights, I saw directly in front of me, down close to the horizon, framed in the round

port-hole of our state-room, the SOUTHERN CROSS. Another ambition realized, for we have wished to see it for many years past. A wonderful sight it is in the "blue velvet" tropical night. It is so distinct that one not even looking for it could not fail to identify it; it is fully as clear as our northern constellation the Big Dipper, although there are only four stars in it, as against seven in the Dipper.

As I caught sight of it framed in the round circle of the port-hole it was almost startling. The stars are placed in the following manner:-  
with no stars in the enclosed space. It will be seen that the right hand star is just slightly out of line, and it is also the least brilliant. Just to be sure, I checked up this morning with the First Officer, and he assured me that I had really

seen it, saying that in this latitude (20 degrees north) it is only visible in the early morning hours, and for a comparatively short time; it rises just a few degrees above the horizon and then sinks below it again, something in this manner:-

Perhaps it is a bit remarkable that we should see it while en route to the city of the true cross (Vera Cruz) and as we looked at it, we were looking in the general direction of Vera Cruz from our ship.

At 09:30 this morning the tender left the dock at Progreso and brought out to our ship, mail, passengers, baggage and freight. Why they did not come out at 07:30 no one knows except heaven and the Mexicans. Surely enough we are in the land of "manana".

One passenger told me of arriving in Progreso one morning some years ago and the authorities radioed that they would not come aboard at all that day as it was a "fiesta" and every one was celebrating.

A brave array of officials in white uniforms came aboard, a dozen or more of them, including the quarantine, customs, immigration, and medical officers with various assistants. After a busy hour of trans-charge, mail and passengers our captain ordered "up anchor" and we steamed away on the last lap of the voyage. At noon to-day (Monday, 26 February) we had 376 miles to go which we are told takes between twenty-three and twenty-four hours, so we should arrive at Vera Cruz about 10:30 on Tuesday.

~~Mexico City, D.F.~~

~~Wednesday Feb. 28, 1934~~



Mexico City, D.F.  
Wednesday, Feb. 28, 1934.

My dear Claude:-

We arrived at Vera Cruz at 09:15 yesterday morning after a rather rough night due to the fact that we ran into the tail of a "norther" which is the "big wind" in the western part of the gulf and along the eastern coast of Mexico. We were off the ship at 10:20 after passing the various Mexican inspectors, such as medical, immigration, and customs. On the dock our baggage was very courteously inspected with just the usual formality of such inspections. We then took seats on the left hand side of a special train which had been backed onto the dock for the accomodation of the ship's passengers. We had Pullman seats in a broiler buffet car, at one end of which was a tiny cafe of sixteen seats and at the other end an observation lounge with eight library chairs. In the body of the car seats for twenty-four passengers. At noon we were served in the cafe a very nice table d'hote luncheon and at 17:00 tea was served. We left Vera Cruz at 11:00 and ran for two hours or more across the tropical coastal plain. Although there is much barrenness there are also fleeting glimpses of beautiful gardens and tropical vegetation. The most gorgeous Bougainvillea vines of both purple and magenta, whole thickets and almost forests of Gardenias in bloom, and a strange shrub about the size of a pear tree bearing a blossom which looked exactly like Easter lillies; the name of which we later learned was "Florifundia." Also banana and orange groves, with now and then a sugar plantation, and in the vicinity of a town called Atoyac we passed near several coffee plantations.

Our stops were at Soledad, Camaron, Pasco del Macho, (where we were taken in tow by very modern electric locomotives) Orizaba, Esperanza, San Marcos, Apizaco, Otumuza, and Mexico City.

At all these stations the natives thronged the platforms, with fruits, cakes, basket, and bead work and various trinkets for sale. They are a good natured people, and though very serious in looks, they break into a delightful smile on certain occasions. Some of Indians are stunning looking people, both men and women.

It is rather hard sometimes to distinguish the ind-

ian from the Spaniard, due to the intermarriages for centuries back.

Our first introduction to Mexican mountain scenery came as the train was leaving Orizaba and immediately started to climb by devious twistings and turnings towards the great central plateau on which the capital is located. From the city of Orizaba at an altitude of 1337 meters, which we had reached by easy stages of climbing from Vera Cruz, a distance of 132 kilometers, to Esperanza a distance of forty-eight kilometers, we reached an altitude of 2454 meters. Or roughly we climbed 3350 feet in thirty miles, and through the most rugged and gorgeous mountain scenery I have ever imagined. Even the Alps do not exceed it. I will not attempt to describe it, I should be wasting my time, for I could not do it even faint justice.

Immediately after leaving Esperanza the whole panorama changes, and one rides for miles and miles across flat dusty prairies, with tiny villages springing into sight here and there, and gigantic mountains showing in the far distance. Mt. Orizaba is the dominating point, and can be seen for two or three hours after leaving Esperanza.

On the plateau the flora changes entirely, and one sees fields of maize, some grassland near the towns, and flocks of sheep, goats, and burros grazing. From Esperanza one loses all trace of the tropical growth and sees the growth of the temperate zone. Soon after leaving the town of Apizaco with its colorful platform crowd, it became dark and we settled down to await the end of the journey at 21:30.

Before we left the train we were advised to eat a very light supper, drink no liquor, and go to bed immediately, so as to give our systems a chance to become accustomed to the high altitude, which is quite apt to cause head-aches and shortness of breath if one is not careful.

Our first night in the city was very quiet; went to bed immediately as we had been instructed and got up in the morning feeling fine.

After breakfast the morning after our arrival we had our first look at the city and find it remarkably beautiful, quite European in character, yet very modern in its appointments. There are several fine boulevards, much statuary, many magnificent residences



splendid memorials, spacious squares, and fine public buildings. The "Paseo de la Reforma" is a beautiful boulevard, three and one half miles long, very wide, with trees along its entire length; it is very much like the Avenue de la Grand Armee in Paris. A word regarding the trees; they are mostly cypress, pepper trees and a species of native tree called "Ahuahuepes". There are four great circles or "glorietas" at intervals of eight or ten blocks (as we would say) where statues and memorials are placed. The most imposing perhaps being the "Monumento de la Independencia," a round, symmetrical column over two hundred feet high surmounted by a figure of Victory, and the base decorated with statues of many of the Mexican national heroes, of the struggle for independence, chief among them Miguel Hidalgo and Jose Morelos. In a crypt beneath the monument rest the ashes of these and many other national heroes. As in Paris and Brussels there is also the "The Eternal Flame of Remembrance".

There is also the statue of Cuiclahuac and his cousin Cuahutemoc, the last Aztec king. I wish I could express the beauty of the figure, it's grace, and the lithe and vibrant "life" in the figure about to launch a spear. There is not a "hard" line in it, any more than in Cyrus Dallin's "Appeal to the Great spirit" which we all love. We were told that at the dedication of the monument some years ago, the exercises were conducted entirely in the ancient Aztec Tongue. Is it not significant that in all the expanse of the Republic there is not a single statue or memorial to the conqueror Cortez?

There is a very fine statue of Columbus, and an immense bronze statue of Charles the IV of Spain, which has the reputation of being one of the largest statues in the world cast in one piece of bronze.

One of the most magnificent buildings I have ever seen is the National Theatre; constructed entirely of snow white Italian marble, and rivaling in grandeur and architecture the Opera in Paris. It faces an open square which sets off it's beauty in very much the same manner that the "Place de l'Opera" sets off the beauty of the Opera in the French city.

The patio of the National Palace or government office building (part of which was built by Cortez) is also very attractive, and I was glad to see the mural decorations of Diego Rivera around one of the staircases. "The History of Mexico in One Picture" It is



modernistic to be sure, but it is all there. Our interest in Rivera is quickened by the fact that his murals of the "Machine Age", done for the Rockefeller Center in New York were considered too "brutal" and were refused.

The great Cathedral facing the "Plaza de la Constitucion" is a wonder in itself. Begun in 1568 and kept in repair with various additions until the present time, it is now the largest Church in the two Americas, and contains many paintings of great rarity by leading Spanish and other European painters of the centuries of it's existence. It housed at one time a priceless canvas by Murillo, but that canvas was removed by the Church authorities during the struggles between the Church and State some years ago, and it's present whereabouts is not known. The Cathedral contains a very rich "Altar of the Kings", a copy of the one in the Cathedral of Seville, in Spain. We shall try to visit there again and I may go into a more detailed description.

The Museum of Mexican Antiquity showed that the Aztecs and Mayans were far advanced in civilization before Cortez came. In fact it has been said that the civilization which the Spaniards destroyed was more advanced than the one they implanted in place of it.

Mexico City, D.F.

Thursday, March 1, 1934.

Dear Claude: -

Chapultepec Park, which we visited in the course of our rambles, is a very beautiful place, and in the midst of it on a hill is Chapultepec castle which is the "White House" of Mexico. The park is carefully gardened, containing many varieties of flowers and shrubs; also apparently endless walks and drives and fountains and lagoons. It is heavily wooded, there being hundreds of century old cypress trees, among them the tree under which Cortez sat down and wept on the "noche triste" when he was driven from the capital by Montezuma's Aztec army. In one of the gardens surrounding the castle is a monument to the military cadets who gave their lives in it's defense when it was stormed by American troops in 1848. Does it not seem strange that a memorial should be built any where to persons who gave their lives in defending

their native land against American invasion? For we Americans are taught to believe that our government's motives are always altruistic where foreign lands are concerned, such as Latin America, the Phillippines, and Cuba.--I wonder, or as the French say, "I ask myself?

After two days here in the city, one can only ex-again and again at it's beauty. We have just browsed around, done a little shopping, and got our locations thoroughly fixed in our minds. To-night we went for an hours ride through the boulevards and out into a residential suburb which was very carefully laid out and exquisitely gardened. From the top of a small hill we had a fine view of the lighted city, and indeed the whole city is remarkably well lighted, the craze for economy in street lighting so common in the States apparently not yet having reached Mexico.

Mexico, D.F.

2 March, 1934.

Amico mio:-

Besides wandering around the city and enjoy- it's boulevards and architecture we made our pilgrim- age to-day to the church and shrine of Guadalupe. It is a twenty or thirty minute ride from the center of the city. This is the National Shrine and all good Mex- icans (and visitors) are supposed to visit it. The famous Shrine is housed in a magnificent basilica, very richly decorated with gold leaf and containing a very ornate altar. As in the European churches, there are no pews. The floor is of polished gray marble in- laid with polished with-pol black volcanic stone. The walls bear some paintings, and there are the usual images of the saints at various points. The vacant floor spaces are extensive and worshipers are seen kneeling every where. We were told that in former times the kneeling worshipers often filled the plaza outside, but that recent laws forbid all religious dem- onstrations outside of church buildings. The outside aspect of the structure is not so very imposing; other buildings of a more or less ramshackle appearance crowd up close to it, and while there is a good sized plaza and a small park in front of it, one is not par- ticularly impressed by the outside view. The color is a shade of yellow which blends with the perpetual dust and sunshine. Just a word here about the sun-



shine. Not only is it perpetual at this time of the year (Mexico City has no rain from September until May) but it seems to have a sort of "colored" quality. By that I mean that as one sees the sunshine on the floor of his room for instance, it seems to possess the colors of the spectrum. Of course this is not actually so, but one can almost see the soft rose color, together with the blues, violets and purples. It is very hard to describe and I fear I am making a very poor job of it, but I did wish to mention it.

To return to the Shrine itself, it is interesting to note that the features of the Virgin are very dark and of an unmistakeable Indian cast, as are the features of many of the Mexican representations of the Saints. In one instance at least there being a "black" Christ on the crucifix in the church of "El Senor del Buen Viaje" at Vera Cruz. The same thing occurs in the representation of "El Senor de la Misericordia" in the church of San Francisco at Tlaxcala, which, by the bye, was the first christian church constructed in the two Americas.

Mexico, D.F.

Saturday Mar. 3, 1934.

My dear Claude; -

Early this morning we started in a <sup>car</sup> furnished by Mr. Bush of the local office of the United Shoe for the floating gardens of Xochimilco, which is called then Venice of America. It is a vast expanse square miles in area, of flower and vegetable gardens separated by canals. One takes a flat-bottomed boat with an Indian to pole it and starts off into the tropical forest. Soon the canals begin to branch off on both sides, and one looks down long vistas of trees with the gardens in the back-ground, and the whole thing seems to be afloat between the canals. The most violets and marguerites are now in bloom, with many others of which I do not know the names. I bought a bunch of violets the size of a peck measure for ten cents (mex) or about two cents American. I gave half of them to our Indian driver, Manuel, and he beamed all over. He could not speak a word of English but we carried on famously.

The vegetable gardens here furnish the green food for the City of Mexico all the year round, it being

WONDERFUL

sent into the city fresh every morning, a distance of about twenty-seven kilometers. A word here about the flowers in this wonderful land. There is no end of them, every farmer cultivates them, every one loves them, and they are truly varied and beautiful. The flower market in Mexico City is as much an institution as it is any city of southern France or in Italy.

On our way out to Xochimilco we passed through the town of Coyocan (place of the coyotes) and there saw the ancient palace of Cortez, now used as a government administration building. It is a one storey affair, built in the conventional Spanish style with patio, balcony and iron grill-work. It was by way of Xochimilco and Coyocan that Cortez first approached the Aztec capital on his march from Vera Cruz. We passed through several more or less attractive suburbs, about the most attractive being the town of Tlalpan. It is very hard for the stranger here to realize that the great majority of the population are Indians, there probably being more Indians in the Mexican Republic to-day than there were on the North American continent at the time of its discovery. Of the 15,000,000 population of the country, about 11,000,000 are Indians. Even in the towns they live in a very primitive way and the evidences of poverty are every where, for which there is an age-long reason, and which the present government is trying to alleviate; but that is a study in itself and I will not burden you with it in these notes.

It being Saturday we passed several "markets" where every imaginable article was spread out for sale on the ground, on donkeys, on Indians backs, on wheel-barrows and every other way, with no regard for dust, dirt or sanitation. On our way back to the City we were fortunate enough to get a fairly good look at the two volcanoes, Popocatepetl and Ixtaccihuatl. They are towering peaks about 16,000 feet high and of course much of the time hidden by clouds.

After lunch at our hotel we took a cab to the Cathedral and looked it over more leisurely than on our first visit. It really is a monumental pile, very large and in a not too good state of repair. The piers and columns of volcanic stone supporting the roof of



the nave are immense, and the roof of the nave is very high. The columns and ribs of the vaulted roof are all fluted, as are also the pilasters and ribs of the arches supporting the roofs of the two aisles. There is a fine brass screen and rood-loft separating the choir from the nave, and in turn leading from the choir to the High Altar and surrounding it. The outstanding feature of the Altar is a circle of ten malachite columns supporting the canopy. The Altar as a whole is very intricate and defies description, by me at least. It may or may not be a beautiful thing, depending on the individual taste. To me it is perhaps a bit too ornate and garish, but I hesitate to criticise. An added word about the Cathedral. I wish to mention the three large alabaster pulpits, a bit the worse for wear perhaps, but still magnificent in their shabbiness. Also to observe that the brass screen and rood-loft of which I spoke, were the gift of a Spanish nobleman, generations ago.

From the Cathedral, which has of course the customary series of chapels surrounding the aisles, we went to the "Alameda" or beautiful park in the center of the city and sat for a while to watch the passing crowds. This park is in the heart of the business district, covers an area of about ten city blocks and is full of tile benches of intricate design, trees, flowers, walks, fountains, and statuary. In the afternoon it is quite the thing for one who has the time to stroll along the Paseo de la Reforma and into the Alameda. All sorts and conditions of men women and children are constantly passing and repassing, from lovely señoritas to Indian carriers with all manner of merchandise on their backs, from beds and bureaus to coffins. We actually saw one Indian with a coffin on his back, and two or three others following him with the other funeral paraphernalia. Two pieces of statuary were particularly interesting to me. They are marbles entitled "Desespoir" and "Malgre Tout". From the fact that they are titled in French I am inclined to think that they may be the work of Rodin. On later inquiry I learned that they are the work of a Mexican sculptor named Jesus Contreras, who spent many years in Paris previous to 1900, and was no doubt influenced by Rodin. The "Desespoir" is very similar to Rodin's "Danaide"

From here as the sun was setting we returned to our hotel by way of the magnificent Paseo de la Reforma La Avenida de los Insurgentes, Avenida Chapultepec, and

La Avenida de Vera Cruz to the Calle de Liverpool on which the hotel is located. All these streets are a joy and a delight every time one passes over them.

I have had within a few hours a delightful interview with Dr. J. P. Hauser, head of the Methodist Mission in Mexico, who explained in some detail the workings and purposes of the laws regarding Church and State. I will not attempt to write of it here, but will save that for conversation at some future time.

Mexico, D.F.

Sunday, 4 March, 1934.

My Dear Claude:-

Well old chap, much water has passed over the dam since I last wrote. Now you know that in all Latin-American countries Sunday is a day of rest and recreation as well as worship, so I spent the day more or less "a la Mexicana". Leaving the hotel at 9:50 we both paid a visit to Dr. Hauser and looked over the "plant and equipment" of the Methodist church in this city. It is housed in a building over 400 years old, which the conquerors built on a spot previously occupied by Montezumas pleasure garden. Teh old cut-throats were good builders and the design and construction are very interesting. From here we went the Hidalgo theatre at 11:00 and heard a superb concert by Joseph Hoffman, the cost of which was 13.60 Mex. or 4.00 American. His playing was delightful and although the audience was small, it made up in enthusiasm what it lacked in numbers. The crowd was very courteous, orderly, and well-mannered, from gallery to boxes. We returned to the hotel for lunch and at 15:00 Mr. Bush came and took me out to the Bull-ring. Alice decided not to go. I am not sure whether Methodism, fatigue, or disgust with me was the deciding factor, but "n'importe pas."

I am glad I went, not that I enjoyed it, but it is a national amusement, has been so much written about, so vigourously condemned, and yet so universally patronized in Spanish countries that I was very desirous of seeing just one. I do not wish to see another, I've visited the stock-yards which is much the same thing minus the tinsel, crowds and betting. I am inclined to look on a bull-fight as no more brutal



thana prize-fight, and a crowd roaring itself hoarse at two human beings battering each other to a pulp goes without remark with us. I do not know why it is any more degrading to see a bull artistically killed than to see a brother human being brutally beaten or cruelly twisted out of shape as in prize-fights and wrestling matches at home. So much for comparisons, but I am glad I went though I should not go again, either to a Prize-fight or a bull-fight. I walked part of the way home in the dust with the crowd and taxied the rest of the way. After dinner some acquaintances took me over to the "Fronton Mexico" and we watched the game of "Jai Alai" for an hour. It is a very fast, open, clean game played on a special indoor court; but I will save a description of it until we can spend an evening together. You will notice again that the "bonne femme" did not accompany me; there were too many stairs to climb, so she rested in.

You will notice Claude that I make no mention of my customary long walks. The reason is that in Mexico City it is not possible for a northerner to take long walks during the first few months of his stay here, because of the altitude. We are 7500 feet above sea-level, and while one can walk three or four blocks, or through the parks, to take two or three mile brisk walks as you and I are accustomed to do, is very trying, if not just a little dangerous, as it often causes palpitation, shortness of breath, dizziness, nausea and so forth; Oh these Mexicans know what they are doing when they go slow.

Mexico, Distrito Federale,  
Monday, 5 March 1934.

Good Friend of Mine:-

To-day we started early in the morning and drove out to the Pyramids of Teotihuacan. (don't try to pronounce it old man, it is hopeless) On the way we stopped at the church and monastery of St. Augustine Acolman, begun by the Augustinians in 1539 and completed in 1560, it is now being maintained by the government as a museum. At one time it was filled with mud and debris to a depth of about ten feet, due to the three great inundations of this region during the last three hundred years. It has a fine nave, vaulted roof and Altar. The adjoining cloisters are in a good state of preservation. The museum contains a

large number of ancient Spanish volumes on parchment and numerous pictures by sixteenth century Spanish, and eighteenth century Mexican artists. The most interesting picture to me was one of St. Anna in which the artist has shown a very wonderful facial expression. It is a canvas which would arrest attention in any European gallery and in this instance the painter's name is not known. The walls of the monastery must have been at one time covered with frescoes, but as the monks when they abandoned the place in 1859, spread fresh plaster over all the frescoes in the place and to expose them the outer layer of plaster must be removed without injuring the layer underneath, many of them are indistinct or damaged. However those which are exposed show an invention and intricacy of design which we of the twentieth century United States have been all too slow in recognizing. Though they are all in "black and white", the absence of the brilliant colors of the Italian frescoes does not detract from their charm. We were shown about by a gentle and smiling Indian care-taker who keeps a few cows and chickens in the old monk's garden, what a contrast.

From here we motored over a modern highway to San Juan Teotihuacan, passing enroute the Casa Morelos where visiting dignitaries to Mexico were received and entertained during the Spanish domination, and in front of which is a monument to the patriot Jose Morelos, who was executed on this spot by the Spaniards in the year 1815. Went on over a causeway which crossed a shallow lake which formerly covered this region; (Lake Taxcoco, recently drained) the causeway and the highway of which it forms a part are a portion of the ancient highway from Vera Cruz to Mexico City, and the old guard-houses or sentry-boxes are still in place along the roadside. Arriving at the Pyramids we found them intensely interesting, but really Claude I think I will not attempt a description or explanation of them. Much has been written about them in scientific magazines, and if you are sufficiently interested you can get a much better explanation from those sources than from me. Of their archeological value and great antiquity there is no question, but they are still very much of a mystery to scientists; no "Rosetta Stone" of the ancient Aztec Hieroglyphs having yet been discovered. They are covered with pictures and figures, and the pyramids of the Sun and of the Moon are so placed that a line drawn from the axis of one



through the axis of the other points to a spot on the horizon directly beneath the North Star, though why it is so or whether it was done intentionally or not no one knows.

We ate our lunch in a charming grove at the base of the Pyramid of the Sun, then visited (superficially) the museum nearby, and started about 14:00 for the town of Tepotzotlan, returning via the same route as far as Guadalupe. From here we swung off the modern highway and struck some of the more primitive "dirt and dust" roads. The ride was intensely interesting however, as we saw more "unvarnished" native life than at any previous time. We were obliged to make a short detour and in so doing went up over a bank into a dry canal bed, followed that for a short way, then over the opposite dike and landed in a barnyard full of children and chickens, donkeys and women; all eyed us stolidly (particularly the donkeys) as we went on our way in a cloud of dust. Passing along a narrow country road we met eight or ten donkeys carting timber. This is done by raising one end of the timber and making it fast to the donkey's back and letting the other end drag in the dust. And what a dust cloud ten of them can raise. To balance the load they put a timber on either side of the burro. Burros and human beings seem to be the only beasts of burden in this strange land. I have already spoken of the strange burdens we have seen on the backs of the indians, and truly the donkeys labor under equally strange loads. We saw some of them laden with straw for one of the military barracks, and the load was without exaggeration four times the size of the burro.

At the small town of Tepotzotlan we visited an old Jesuit monastery and found it even more beautiful and attractive than the one at Acolman. It was built about the middle of the sixteenth century, and although it is now abandoned, it is in a good state of preservation and repair. The construction is of the customary yellow stone and the outside is very ornately decorated after the style of the architect Chirrugetera; in fact much of the architecture in Mexico is termed "Chirrugeteresque." The church and cloisters with the attendant gardens

are remarkable, and to me very beautiful. Tepetzotlan contains many paintings by Mexican and Spanish artists, among them Cabrera, Juarez, and Padrilla. In this case the frescoes are in color instead of black and white. The two cloister gardens bring back memories of hooded friars probably enjoying rest and relaxation in their shade. They are called "The Court of the Two Wells" and "The Court of the Oranges". This spot was by all means the most attractive we have yet visited.

On our return to the city we washed off the dust of the day (1 1/2 inches thick) and went out for dinner at the home of Dr. and Mrs. Hauser. We spent a most delightful evening going over their over their library of rare old volumes on Mexico, and chatting <sup>OF</sup> conditions and future prospects in the the Republic.

I have spoken of the dust here; it is the one thing which is not agreeable. The bed of the lake which has been drained (Taxcoco) raises tremendous clouds of it every day in addition to what rises from the roads and fields. The purpose of draining the lake which was shallow and swampy, was to promote arable land; but the lake bed soil was found to be so full of alkali that it proved to be of no use for cultivation, so all that can be raised from it is a cloud of dust.

Mexico, D.F.

Tuesday, March 6, 1934.

Dear Claude:-

To-day Mr. Bush provided a car and driver for us and we went out to a resort town called Cuernavaca. It is here that old Cortez had one of his palaces and Mexicans go out here for week-ends at the present time. It's altitude is 3500 feet lower than Mexico City and consequently it is somewhat warmer. It is a most beautiful ride of seventy kilometers, over a ridge of mountains the highest point of which is about 9000 feet above sea-level, 3008 meters to be exact. The highest point along the route is marked by a stone cairn bearing a bronze plate giving the altitude and called the "cima" or summit. The road is modern, hard surfaced, wide, and winds itself around the mountain-side very



much in the manner of the Corniche drive between Nice and Monte Carlo. On the route one passes various small towns, among them the town of "Tres Marias" which is interesting from the fact that here a treaty was signed many years ago which ended one of the many struggles between rival factions of the government. Also one passes near Mount Ajusco which is tremendous cone of pure rock.

Starting as we did early in the morning, before the dust clouds began to rise, we had a wonderful view of the two volcanic mountains which dominate the whole valley in which the capital is located. From the little suburb of Tacuba up to "La Cima" they were constantly in sight from various angles. They are so grand and "imperious" that they make a most vivid and lasting impression. Ixtaccihuatl, or "Sleeping Lady" is the lower of the two, about 15000 feet. It was so named by the Aztecs because the contour of its sky-line forms the outline of a woman lying on her back, as you will see from pictures which I am bringing home. The higher one Popocatepetl, is an almost perfect volcanic cone over 17000 feet high and still smoking at long intervals. They are both snow-capped and make an unforgettable picture.

Cuernavaca itself has an interesting cathedral, a fine new golf club, many interesting and modern residences including that of ex-president Calles, the "strong man" of present day Mexico, the ancient palace of Cortez, a modern gambling casino, and the the famous "Borda Gardens" dating from the middle of the seventeenth century.

And here at this garden I had an experience which will interest you. The charge for a "look-see" is twenty five cents (Mex) and as our driver took us in we were met by the proprietor. Our driver spoke no English whatever and the proprietor noticed the blank expression on our faces as we listened to his explanation of the place in Spanish. Approaching me he made a courtly bow and said in broken English "You are English speaking only?" I answered "Yes" and he looked me up and down for a moment and said "Un peu de Francais peut-etre?" You can imagine my surprise and delight, for from that moment we conversed in French and were his personal guests.

I found that he was a Marseillais and thirty years a resident of Mexico; twenty-four years since visiting "La Belle France" as he called it. When he found that we had visited Avignon, Marseilles, and Nice he nearly wept on my shoulder. This is for you to remember when you visit Mexico next year; you will find him at "Le Jardin Bordau". He runs a restaurant in the garden, but as it was only ten in the morning we did not accept his hospitality.

The old palace of Cortez is now used as an administration building for the municipality and in one department you can get a divorce in about thirty minutes (don't tell your wife.) From the rear of the palace one gets a gorgeous view of "Old Pope" as the mountain is affectionately called here. The more one sees of this country, the more respect one has for old Cortez and his band of cut-throats. They surely knew how to take advantage of the good things they found here.

Returning to the city by the same scenic route we noticed again that the entire distance was guarded by squads of soldiers placed at very frequent intervals. On inquiry we learned that a few years ago the road was a favourite resort for bandits. In fact it was in this very neighborhood that the rebel Zapata carried on his blood thirsty depredations. However I could not seem to develop a fit of the Shivers.

Late in the afternoon we drove again to Chapultepec Castle again and bribed our way inside to see some of the rooms and apartments. Saw the room where the cabinet meets, and went into the dining-room of the present president. He had just finished his tea, and the service was still on the table. The apartments occupied at one time by the Emperor Maximilian and Empress Carlotta are maintained in their original style and it is truly Regal. Here at Chapultepec as well as at the National Palace and at Cuernavaca, are many Murals by Diego Rivera. However much his work may be criticized, it is interesting and arresting to me.

We saw all this for the judicious expenditure of "uno peso" to one of the guards(?)



Mexico, D.F.

Wednesday, 7 March 1934

My Dear Claude:-

We left Mexico City behind us at 7:30 in the morning and as our train wound it's way out across the great plateau the two peaks were constantly in sight and remained so for four hours or more. We surely feasted our eyes on them for the last time. For a short time as we left the town of Apizaco with it's colorful platform crowd, four great peaks were in sight; Ixtaccihuatl, "Popo", Malintzin, and Orizaba. Malintzin is named for the Indian girl who acted as interpreter for Cortez and lived with him from the time of the conquest until her death many years later. She was of inestimable value to him as interpreter, counsel and guide. Orizaba is another nearly perfect volcanic cone and the highest of them all, 18,225 feet, the second highest peak on the North American continent. Soon the first two dropped below the horizon leaving the glory to Orizaba, named by the Aztecs "Citlaltepetl", Mountain of the Stars. We had many good looks at it as we approached the town of Esperanza which is not many miles from it's base and where the descent from the great central plateau begins.

As our train wound it's way down the mountain range some of our fellow-travellers who had crossed the Rockies several times, said there was nothing in the Rockies to compare with the scenery. In the space of three hours or so we descended to within 500 feet of sea-level and were again in the Tropics.

This state of Vera Cruz is one of the richest in the Republic, producing coffee, tobacco, bananas, silver, oranges and other tropical articles. Until about 1 1/2 years ago it was governed by a radical, who put all business men in a state of uncertainty and nearly wrecked the province.

Arriving at Vera Cruz at 17:30 we were met by representatives of the Ward Line who took us at once to the ship to stay the night, although we had planned to stop at a hotel and go aboard in the morning. We were not allowed to take our baggage on board however, as it is necessary to have baggage inspected on leaving Mexico as well as on arriving,

and of course at that hour the Customs House was closed. We were allowed to take our night clothes and toilet articles with us and that was all.



On Board S.S.Oriente At Sea  
Thursday 8 March 1934.

Dear Patient Friend:-

We found this morning that the customs inspection is superficial, and every thing is now over and attended to. We waited a few hours for the completion of cargo loading and finally got "under way" at 14:00.

I was told by Mr. Vela the resident manager of the line at Vera Cruz that the Oriente brought in 1500 tons of cargo and is taking out 1300 tons, which he admitted is "paying business."

As we got "under way" and steamed out past the break-water and the old military prison of San Juan de Ulloa, around St. Sacrificios, an island where human sacrifices used to be made by the Aztecs, I stood in the stern of the ship and had a last long look at the white walls of the city fading in the distance.

Now then, I must say that we have fallen completely under the spell of the country and it's gracious delightful people. They have so much here that one can enjoy. I come more and more to feel as I travel about that our own country, as much as I love it, has not enough respect for the attainments and achievements of other countries.

True there is great poverty here, but the natives are happy and friendly. They do not work to obtain money as we northerners do, but just work to obtain a living. A living obtained, they take a holiday and enjoy life in their own way. True enough the living which the native obtains would not satisfy a person according to our standards, but why should we criticize that? They are happy and is not that the main thing?

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On Board S.S.Oriente  
Havana Harbor, 10 March 1934.

After a fine voyage with balmy weather and smooth seas we steamed into Havana harbor again at 8 o'clock this morning and at 10:00 went ashore for a look at the city. Our guide was very fair but he was obliged to hurry us along in order to get the party back to the ship for lunch. We had our's at a cafe in the city however.

Our first stop was at "Sloppy Joe's Bar" where

some of the party had a "planter's punch", some had pine-apple juice, and some had the "air" I'm not telling what I had. Next visited the church of "Our Lady of Mercy (Nuestra Senora de la Mercedes) which is highly decorated, beautifully lighted and modern. It also contains a reproduction of the grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes. Then drove through some interesting streets ancient and modern, and saw a few examples of old Spanish architecture, but only a few. Drove along the water-front drive called El Malecon which is very attractive. Along this drive are still to be seen parts of the old city wall, and some of the ancient defensive fortifications; also various memorials including one to Gen. Maceo who was a full-blooded negro born a slave. And the Battleship Maine memorial which is very interesting when explained. Along El Malecon are several houses which were sacked and wrecked during the recent revolution, they being at that time residences of officials in the Machado government.

Then drove out through the residential section where there are many palatial residences, many of them homes of sugar magnates. Our guide informed us that "Here is where the sugar daddies live." We were then taken back to the ship where most of the party went to lunch, but we hired the car for ourselves for an hour or two and went into the city for lunch. After a very tasty and refreshing luncheon we went to the old "Columbus Cathedral" all by ourselves and found it a veritable treasure house of interesting things, especially it's hammered and filigree silver work, which is old and marvelous. While there we heard a remarkably sweet-toned bell strike the hour, and learned that it was cast in Spain in the year 1347. There are several rare paintings in the old Cathedral including three by Velasquez, two by Raphael, and one by Murillo.

This was the most satisfactory hour of our very short visit to Havana. The guide who showed us around the Cathedral was himself an art lover, and when he realized that we were kindred spirits he showed us things which many tourists never see. I am sure of this, for I have asked others if they saw the things which we did, and have been answered in the negative.



We rode out again along El Malecon and saw a group of American sailors around the battleship Maine memorial. They told us that they had been in the harbor since the first of September, and were allowed only four hours liberty each week. The Maine memorial is of marble and bronze. Two female figures in bronze signifying the sister republics. On the reverse side a bronze figure of the "mother" holding over either arm the figure of a drowned son, in memory of the 268 men who were drowned when the Maine sank. The twin marble columns also signify the sister republics, with the eagle of liberty perched on the plinth which unites them at the top.

We then returned to the ship as it was nearing 16:00 and sailing time.

Well, after Mexico, Havana is not so attractive. The begging in the streets is universal and persistent; barefooted urchins are constantly under foot, touts and runners for all sorts of stores and dives are a constant nuisance. We went into a restaurant for our lunch, and although the luncheon was excellent, before we left, the proprietor or his agent wanted to send us to the proper place to buy a linen suit or a panama hat, or some of the finest liquors. All that sort of thing is just plain annoying, don't you think so?

It seems to me that Havana is so near the States and has catered to American tourists for so long that it has lost its individuality. Many of its visitors for years have been the cheap American "whoopie seekers" and they have left their mark on the city-- to the city's sorrow it, seems to me.

Parts of the city are very beautiful. The Capitol building is one of the finest I have ever seen. Too beautiful for me to attempt a description; one might properly compare it with the Palais de Justice at Brussels, I think. The Prado is a grand boulevard leading from the center of the city to the waterfront. But when one stops to think that a large part of all this work is not paid for and probably never will be paid for because of repudiated bonds, it just rather takes the "shine" off, don't you think so?

I am writing this on the ship after spending the day ashore. It is now 23:00 and we are still waiting for the ship to sail. We were scheduled to sail during the afternoon, but there is a 'long shoremen's strike in progress and every thing along the water-

front is in a turmoil. All the streets in the vicinity and all the entrances to the pier sheds are patrolled and guarded by soldiers and sailors. Our ship was loaded by strike-breakers under heavy armed guard. Just a few minutes ago there was a little gun-play in the street in front of our pier, but it was soon over. At 21:00 the Orizaba came into port but did not tie up to the dock. She rigged out a boom and hoisted some mail and freight ashore. We are just slipping away from the dock and as it is late, and there will not be any more excitement I think I will "turn in".

On Board S.S. Oriente At Sea,  
Monday 12 March 1934.

Dear Pal o' Mine:-

We are well on our way north now and enjoying(?) some good rough weather. No sooner were we out of Havana harbor than it turned cold and during the night the wind came on to blow in good old North Atlantic style from the North-east, and the good ship Oriente is quite active "bow and stern."

Perhaps a few observations may not be uninteresting to you as our most delightful journey nears its close.

Many people said to us before we started: - "I should think you would be afraid to go to Mexico, afraid of bandits and robbers." In answer to that I want to say that nowhere in Mexico did we encounter a scowl, frown or a black look. Their courtesy and politeness among all classes is refreshing after the pushing and hauling brusqueness to which we are accustomed at home. We had delightful taxi drivers and waiters everywhere we went. From now on three words are deleted from my vocabulary, "spick" as referring to a Mexican, "frog" as referring to a Frenchman, and "wop" as referring to an Italian. Neither will I have it used in my presence without making an issue of it.

While Mexico may not be as far advanced as we think we are, it seems to me that no nation has <sup>STARTED FROM</sup> a lower level, and advanced as far as she has.

Totally different was the settlement of Mexico from the settlement of our own Atlantic sea-board. Our own country was settled by groups of free men,



who sought in a new land religious and political freedom. Mexico was not "settled" in the sense that we understand the term, it was "conquered," and by whatna band of ruthless adventurers. Their aim was to plunder, rob, and crush the natives in the dust. So much for the appearance of white civilization in our country and theirs. A little thought will show well the differences which existed at the very start. The robbing, plundering, and dispossession of the natives continued under the Spanish Viceroy for 300 years, and for almost another hundred years under various dictatorships following independence. How could they advance? and yet they have. The war for American independence covered a period of seven years and left the colonies prostrate. The Mexican war for independence lasted eleven years in a country destitute at the start, and yet they "carried on" for fifty years more (until the advent of Porfirio Diaz) with scarcely a semblance of stable government. Mexico was for 300 years the most priest-ridden country on earth, yet we find that the leader of the revolt of 1810 was a liberal minded parish priest named Miguel Hidalgo, who read the famous "Gritos del Dolores" from his own pulpit and suffered excommunication for his temerity. When he was captured and shot by the Spaniards in 1811, his work was carried on by another priest, Jose Morelos, until he in turn was captured and shot. Looking back over the history of our own Revolution, how many of the patriot leaders were captured and shot by the British?

The church was the "right arm" of the viceroys and at one time owned one-half the land in the country and held mortgages over one-half the remainder, think that over; and we we must not forget that it was the viceroys backed by the church and the inquisition which kept the people ignorant and without land.

Small wonder then, that in the constitution of 1857, written by Benito Juarez a full blooded Indian, we find the clauses separating Church and State, expropriating the Church's lands, and declaring freedom of conscience the basic law of the Land. There

had been nothing in Mexico even faintly resembling freedom of conscience for nearly 350 years.

Was not that an advance? I think it was a great one. And we must not forget that all these Mexican patriots were catholics and faced in their struggles that most awful of punishments meted out to catholics---excommunication.

So it seems to me that the achievements of Mexico have been very wonderful.

There are comparatively few purewhites in the country. Of a population of nearly 15,000,000, about 9,000,000 are Indians and 3,000,000 mixed or Mestizes and it appears that a great majority of the men honored in Mexican history have been of Indian blood. I recall just now Hidalgo, Juarez, Diaz, and within our own memory Calles and Obregon.

I do not know whether or not you will care for these general observations, but as our trip nears its end, it seemed to me only a fitting conclusion to this series of letters or diary account, or whatever name you choose to call it.

To-morrow morning we shall be back in the good old U.S.A. and I am looking forward to seeing you and going over these notes in person with you.

Adios amigo, vaya con Dios y no tenga usted cuidado.